

Frequently Asked Questions (WRC International)

What is the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC)?

The WRC is the largest effort in the world of men working to end men's violence against women.

How did the WRC get started?

In 1991, a handful of men in Canada decided we had a responsibility to urge men to speak out against violence against women. We decided that wearing a white ribbon would be a symbol of men's opposition to men's violence against women.

After only six weeks preparation, as many as one hundred thousand men across Canada wore a white ribbon. Many others were drawn into discussion and debate on the issue of men's violence.

Basic Philosophy: Is your only concern men's violence against women?

We are concerned about all forms of violence.

Our central focus is on men's violence against women. Comparing violence committed by women and by men, Statistics Canada (2000 Report on Family Violence) notes that the result of men's violence is five times as likely to require medical attention. Women are four times as likely as men to fear for their lives, and three and a half times as likely to be murdered by a male spouse than vice versa.

We are deeply concerned about violence against children, which is committed by both women and men (although men commit most acts of sexual violence against children.) We are concerned about the many forms of men's violence against other men, whether it's in a bar, on a playground, or in a sports arena, and whether it's because of someone's skin color, sexual orientation, culture, or simply because they looked the wrong way. And we are concerned by any acts of violence by women against men, although these are comparatively rare.

Does this mean you think that men are bad? Are you male bashers?

We don't think that men are naturally violent and we don't think that men are bad. The majority of men are not violent. Researchers have discovered many past cultures with little or no violence.

At the same time we do think that many men have learned to express their anger or insecurity through violence. Many men have come to believe that violence against a woman, child or another man is an acceptable way to control another person.

The problem does not stop with physical violence. There are forms of emotional violence--from sexist joking, to sexual harassment at work, to other domineering forms of behavior. By remaining silent about these things, we allow other men to poison our working and learning environments.

The good news is that more and more men want to make a difference. Caring men are tired of the sexism that hurts the women around them.

We're not male bashers because we're men, working with men, who care about what happens in the lives of men.

What about the participation of a man who was violent in the past?

We believe that violent men can change--otherwise we might as well pack up our bags and forget the whole thing. If a violent man has taken responsibility for his past actions, if he has paid society's price or made amends, has sought treatment, if he doesn't hide the fact that he was once violent, then, normally, we welcome his participation. At the same time, the campaign will not be a smoke-screen for any violent man pretending innocence.

Can women wear a ribbon? Help in the campaign?

The WRC is a campaign of men, aimed at men. Wearing a ribbon is a statement of *men's* opposition to violence against women. We haven't encouraged it, but in some schools and communities women also have decided to wear white ribbons.

In some communities and schools, women have played a key role in getting a white ribbon effort off the ground. Many women have chosen to financially support our work because they believe we are tackling violence at its roots. We acknowledge and greatly appreciate their support while believing that men must take on the task of building the campaign.